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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the unique make-up of selective colleges as opposed to those with open admission policies, variances in individual colleges, and how Upward Bound students can be prepared for selective colleges. Some orientations of selective colleges have been described as realistic, scientific, enterprising, and conventional. All of these orientations give low priority to interpersonal relations, the social sciences, and arts and humanities; the environments are highly competitive academically and little concern is manifested for the individual student. This failure to emphasize interpersonal relations will constitute an obstacle for the Upward Bound student. Students and staff on a selective college are less likely to be aware of or support the special needs of Upward Bound students. The staff of educational opportunity programs need to insure that the student's psychological, spiritual, financial, and physical needs can be met by the school they choose. In selective colleges that have special admission programs for disadvantaged, it is important to determine whether they have remedial courses, special classes, a reduced course load or delayed evaluation program, ethnic studies programs, and other supportive services. There is a need to prepare students for such things as the use of textbooks, listening and notetaking skills, how to prepare for and take tests, and the improvement of general verbal skills, writing, and vocabulary improvement, and reading skills. Students should also be prepared for the contact with students who will view them as different, and early career counseling is essential to student success. (SW)

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Surviving in Wonderland: Factors for Success in Upward Bound Students Attending Selective Colleges

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This paper is titled fully, surviving in wonderland factors for success in upward bound students attending selective colleges. In this session we will examine the characteristics of a typical Upward Bound student only superficially since that has been not only covered in other sessions, but is information that you may be only too aware of. We will examine the unique make up of selective colleges as opposed to those with open admissions policies and variances in individual colleges and finally we will look at how we can prepare Upward Bound students for those colleges, for it is my belief that Upward Bound will provide an attractive pool of potential clients in the crunch of admissions to come in the next ten years.

For those of you who haven't read Lewis Carrolls delightful story of Alice in Wonderland in a while I would submit to you that Wonderland as described by Carroll is truly a marvelous place with some amazing resemblances to some college campuses in this country. Actually there seems to be a logic to everything in Wonderland that everyone seems to understand except Alice. There is, for example a poignant exchange between Alice and the Footman at the Mad Hatters tea party. Alice asks, as perhaps one of our students might, "How am I to get in?" The frog Footman responds with what I'm sure was an air of indignant sophistication - "Are you to get in at all. That is the first question." Heretofore, for most students who weren't well-heeled financially and consequently not well-heeled academically, the question has always been "Are you to get in

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at all" and of course the unasked question - the hidden agenda is are you to stay in until you get your degree.

Later in the novel Alice asks the Cheshire cat "Would you tell me which way I ought to go from here?" The Cheshire cat replies "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." It is in fact the role of Educationally Opportunity Program Personnel to help the student client to determine where he wants to go before someone shouts "Off with his (academic) head."

It is in preparing these students that EOP personnel can take much of the mystery out of the wonderland effect that selective colleges may produce.

I began with the premise that Upward Bound types may become very attractive clients to selective colleges in the near future. That fact may be borne out in the prediction that there will be a 20% drop in the number of traditional high school graduates who go on to college in the 80's. We must of course add to the constant competion of universities for live, subsidy bringing bodies, the vocational-technical schools that appear to be springing up everywhere with attractive and job-oriented curricula. Nor can we overlook the proprietary schools who can offer students learn and earn options. The recent move away from tuition tax credits and toward a higher ceiling for Basic Educational Opportunity Grants to include the middle income family is being hailed as having the most profoundly dramatic effect on higher education since the G.I. Bill. What we may see then is the competition

not only for those who can bring subsidy but for those who can also bring big federal bucks in the form of grants, loans and work-study funds. For some colleges to survive this will be the race they must win. Who better fits the bill than an Upward Bound student for supplying and meeting these needs.

Dr. Joseph Lewis, an esteemed colleague from Central State University in Wilberforce has done a comprehensive study of Upward Bound in Ohio over the years 1968-1975. In his research Dr. Lewis outlines the focus of the program in "seeking out students living in families and neighborhoods whose low income levels and psychological-sociological environment would tend to inhibit their ability to enter and to achieve success in post-secondary institutions." Lewis points out that Upward Bound grew from 2,065 students in 1965 to 20,333 in 1966, with estimates that up to 600,000 students could possible be helped. The obvious boon to colleges of 600,000 new bodies each possibly bringing in perhaps $3,000 in federal aid will not go unrecognized. Additionally, we in Educational Opportunity Programs should also recognize that perhaps now like no time in the past and perhaps never again in the future our students have an unprecedented chance to break the bonds of poverty through education. This enormous opportunity to escape from the spiral of the culture of inequality, however often follows not the yellow-brick road of Oz, but a road through wonderland where things may not always be what they seem and the numerous diversions may prove too tempting for the somewhat unsophisticated youngster. If our students are to take advantage of this

opportunity and access they must come into the university armed with survival skills and mechanisms that allow them to avoid becoming academic casualties and wind up as the Richardson of some college campus. You may not know Richardson but you know his type, for I'm sure every college has one. Richardson came to college from a broken home, was poor but hard working and ambitious. He had average abilities and chose a reasonable major. He had an up and down academic career. Flashes of above average work followed by periods of lethargy in which he did failing work. Eventually Richardson withdrew just before flunking out but never left wonderland. He become part of the local drug scene and somewhat of a campus fixture. He talks occasionally of getting back in school although he never works. This young man who could have been someone productive has become debris on the junk heap of academic life. Is he some prototype for the future of disadvantaged types who may come into the wonderland of selective colleges?

Shirley Ellis of Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio has given a brief profile of an Upward Bound student. She indicates they are minority student come from a one parent home, have an average family size of 5, are reading at least 3 years behind grade level, family income of less than $4,000. Lewis cites students in Upward Bound as black with family size of 5, single parent usually the mother, with little formal education and they are poor.

Alexander Astin in an American Council on Education Study gave the following as the typical features of a college dropout-flunk-out:

1. poor high school record and grades
2. bad study habits
3. low income
4. poorly educated parents
5. protestant
6. habitual smokers

I must admit our friend Richardson could fill up an ashtray in fifteen minutes but I never associated that with his susceptibility to failure. Seriously I hope you will notice the correlations between our typical Upward Bound student and our typical dropout. There are areas which we can influence and those we cannot. My contention is that looking ahead we must do everything possible to bring down the odds against the Upward Bound student. We in Educational Opportunity can have little impact on a student's poverty. However we can ameloriate the impact of poverty on the students aspirations. We must as Thucydides said, "Place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining to struggle against it." We cannot reduce the family size or educate the parents. We can provide scientific study habits and the necessary belief in one's own ability. Joseph Lewis concludes his dissertation with an extremely applicable message, one which perhaps we might all internalize. He says:

> " (18) Upward Bound staff and others committed to the project's goal must not despair, quit, or effectively resign. Students can be taught, can learn and will learn that

> education should be taken seriously and that through creativity, and much work, one can demonstrate that there is no artificial barrier to magnificent success. One's background, socio-economic level need not be a hinderance to growth if but we the people in our communities, our schools, our legislative bodies, our personal and comprehensive attitudes decide that indeed there will be a large measure of joy! "

Selective colleges are marked by several characteristics and I must note that not among those is the fact that they are all predominantly white. Morehouse, Fisk, Spellman, Bennett and Howard are but a few of the predominantly black colleges that demonstrate all of the characteristics ascribed to selective colleges in general.

While being generally private, they are also public, coed and vary in size and location. For the most part they are the nation's wealthiest and most stable. They are more likely to give scholarships, loan or job opportunties. The institutions can be called elitist in that they are fairly selective with median ACT scores for freshmen averaging in the mid to high 20"s, with over 50% of the students earning 3.5 or better in high school grades and a high percentage of students receiving National Merit recognition. It is clear that most Upward Bound students in these situations will find themselves among students, who are <u>very</u> high achievers. Perhaps it is the environmental orientation of the institution that may create the greatest problem for the student. John Holland has established the Environment Assessment Technique which labels the orientation of selective colleges. There are several I would like to examine. First is the <u>Realistic Orientation</u> -

Most degrees are in agriculture, engineering, physical education, forestry and industrial arts. Preference is for the practical and concrete over the abstract.

Second is the Scientific Orientation - Here most degrees are in the natural sciences with a low priority given to interpersonal relations and social activities.

Next is the Enterprising Orientation - Here most degrees are in advertising, journalism, business administration, history, political science, international relations and foreign service. Interest is in power and status. Encouragement is in the development of verbal and persuasive skills.

Finally there is the Conventional Orientation - Here large numbers of degrees are conferred in accounting, business, economics and library science. Considerable conformity among students authoritarian attitudes on the part of the administration.

It should be noted that all of these orientations give low priority to interpersonal relations, the social sciences and arts and humanities. These institutions are highly competitive academically and manifest little concern for the individual student. This failure to emphasize interpersonal relations will constitute an obstacle to the Upward Bound student. Again most selective colleges classify themselves as more in line with the conventional orientation. Surprisingly these schools don't see themselves as being snobbish and they feel that special students will be more readily accepted.

Selective schools have only a small proportion of students whose family income is near the poverty range. The schools average around 6% black students and student aspirations are very high with career choices such as engineers, doctors, lawyers, college professors and business men as the top choices. It should also be noted that Astin's polling of students at these schools found that most had reservations about giving preferential treatment to the disadvantaged. In essence they too favor the perpetuation of the culture of inequality.

Joseph Lewis describes the qualitites of good Upward Bound staff members as those who can love, are tolerant, who generate enormous energy and dedication. We can add empathetic, open, flexible, secure and sensitive. The conventional orientation of a selective college neither recognizes nor rewards such qualities and students there may find that all staff and particularly minority staff are victims of the cycle of publish and perish and have little time, energy or inclination to develop a close personal relationships and understanding of student needs. Least I paint too bleak a picture, we must realize that many selective schools have internal support programs such as Special Services, E.O.P., Developmental Education, etc. The question of importance is can these relatively small programs continue to meet the needs of a larger, more in need population and can they offset the hostility and indifference of the campus at large? Again pointing to Lewis' work he indicates approximately 77% of those in Upward Bound have entered college. As compared to about 40% of non-Upward Bound students from the target schools. The record is not so bright

on the other end with about 36% of those earning Bachelors degrees. I think a case can be made for the fact that loosing the support of the program may lead some to academic disaster. Yet the promise of American education is that if you work you shall succeed. Perhaps it is for us to marvel at that 36% success factor rather than bemoan those who did not succeed, for in the words of some high school counselors, "it is stupid of the federal government to use the public treasury to prop up these unfit individuals that everybody realizes are failures and losers." We must take the view that in light of the inadequacies of their preparation it is an achievement just to complete regular college courses. Astin's ACE data shows that about 13% of disadvantaged students enrolled in selective colleges perform at a B+ or better rate. This is indicative of the vast potential these youngsters have. Unfit? Losers? Only when we give up on them and then we become losers too. Another counselor put it most succinctly:"No one is lost if someone cares enough to raise his self image, to motivate him to seek loftier heights. Not all can be saved but I have never seen anyone totally lost who has been exposed to a good Upward Bound program. The degree to which he has been helped may not be measured by his acceptance into college but rather by his change in attitude toward his fellow man wherever he may be. "

Students have voiced their general dislike for the learning atmosphere and the social atmosphere of selective colleges. Often students arrived with positive attitudes which switched to negative attitudes after one year. While maintaining satisfaction with the academic reputation of these institutions there is a general dissatisfaction with faculty student relations and the administration. These problems can be magnified if the location presents

a problem as in a college located in a small white-middle class rural community which provides little with which a black student can identify with. The ambivalent feelings this setting can produce are cited by a student who says: "I strongly disliked it when I first came. It was small and rural and I was accustomed to an urban environment. After four years the institution grows on one and one becomes accustomed to its slower pace and rural environment. Its the kind of place where one can do a great deal of introspection and find out what he or she is all about. It could use some more brothers and sisters; also the lack of an indigenous black community makes the applicability of learned theory rather difficult."

That is not to say that an urban setting eliminates those problems.As one student said "It's difficult to know people. I only see people in classes. Its difficult to say hello to strangers. They'd think you're crazy."

Additionally one might find that students and staff on a selective college are less likely to be aware of or support the special needs of Upward Bound types. While faculty may be more likely to know about these students, they are unlikely to be equipped with dealing with them effectively. Other staff may be both ignorant and insensitive. There is little likelihood of an Upward Bound student knowing a staff member socially. The general student attitude may well be quiet hostility and open apathy and indifference. Students at selective colleges tend to be more tolerant and sympathetic in thought and speech than in action.

How then can Educational Opportunity personnel, particularly Upward Bound staff best prepare students for their voyage through wonderland? We know that Alice had several potions which made her larger or smaller depending on the situation. I'm sure we'd all find it helpful if we could offer to our students some elixer to make them psychologically stronger or wiser when it was needed. We might all agree that in a society drenched with pharmacological solutions for non existent problems, our students are only too aware of how strong or wise they <u>feel</u> after ingesting or inhaling certain chemicals.

No, we need to work up some real solutions to real dilemmas students face. We must do everything we can to see that the students psychological, spiritual, financial and physical needs can be met by the school they choose and if we feel that they cannot, we must have the courage to advise them to seek another. Most selective colleges have some special admission program for disadvantaged students and it is here where the real scrutiny may have to take place. We will assume all of the standards such as tutorial counseling and guidance are available. We must, however, search out those with remedial courses, special classes or workshops, a reduced course load or delayed evaluation program. Are there ethnic studies programs or other supportive services ?

We should do some work in matching the student to the school. Examination of such areas as student responsibility as opposed to irresponsible behavior (being on time, typing papers versus oversleeping, missing class, drinking excessively or staying up late).

We should perfect begin to prepare students for such things as the use of textbooks, listening and notetaking skills with all that each involves, how to prepare for and take tests of various types specifically essay tests, the use of note cards, the use of a buddy system of study, how to avoid the temptation of cheating through adequate preparation, the improvement of general verbal skills, writing and vocabulary improvement and of course reading skills.

Additionally we should prepare the student for the contact with students who will view him as different. Specifically, black disadvantaged students and to a degree white disadvantaged students will find his classmates themselves may create his most trying problems. Selective schools tend to be class oriented with many black and most white students coming from middle class relative affluence. The black students may consist largely of athletes, gladiators who spend their four years of eligibility on a pedestal before being replaced. The nature of the athletic foundation may provide them with a false sense of self worth and acceptance and produce a condescending attitude toward those "less fortunate". Middle class blacks may themselves view the disadvantaged student as an embarrassment and close them out of their cliques. Greek letter organizations on the other hand have tended to promote a disadvantaged

students persistance and his overall satisfaction with the college. It is essential that the student develop a peer group association that is supportive, positive and constructive. He must know that in a restricted circle his faults and weaknesses and even his personal business will be subject to general discussion and inspection. While the group is important, the individual must have the ability to feel that his individual acts should not alienate him from the "family of blacks" on campus. Individuality, self-reliance and self-assurance are essential for success.

We can develop a new appreciation and understanding of the concept of Time as in the sheer brevity of an hour or four years, how time can be so easily misused and wasted and how of all the assets one can have time is the only one that is irreplacable and irretrievable.

Of course we would be remiss not to prepare these students for the pitfalls of involvement in a drug or alcohol culture. Psychological dependence on drugs is not an inevitable result of depression or inability to cope. There is perhaps no greater danger for these students than the readily available, dependence producing wide variety of illegal stimulants and depressants. The "coolness" of being high must be pointed out for the fools paradise that it is. We don't need any more Richardsons or Charlie Parkers or John Coltranes.

Finally I think that early career counseling is absolutely essential to the students success. Any approach that provides the student with a realistic view of expectations and demands

of the chosen profession are valuable. Too often, I believe aspiring young lawyers have seen too much Perry Mason. Too many aspiring doctors have marveled at Marcus Welby without ever considering the grinding years of study each profession requires, not to mention the requisite skills both demand. Never kill a dream but always nurture a realistic self appraisal. Also open the door of exploration for such careers as petroleum geologists actuaries, bank officers, city managers, marketing researchers, foresters, soil conservationists, civil, biomedical, chemical, electrical and mechanical engineers, meteorologists, oceanographers, astronomers, economists, geographers, rehabilitation counselors, recreation workers, industrial designers, landscape architects, interpreters (particularly of African and East Asian languages), fashion designers, commercial and civil aviationists, food service specialists, and a vertible plethora (excuse me Howard) of other professions of tomorrow where the disadvantaged are totally underrepresented. Surely there will be the teachers and the social workers but let us open the door. Joseph Lewis again has said, "Upward Bound students are typically not aware of the opportunities that exist and/or their own abilities or limitations." It is within you to help them to soar like young eagles to heights unimaginable to them. It will not be easy nor without pain,but it can be. Ray Patterson describes the feeling of wonderland in what he calls Riot Rime #79:

> You got to be cared
> Both ways.
> To know what I mean
> And be where I've been
> Scare beating on the door
> from the outside
> And scared when they let you in.

I shall close with some rather interesting data collected by Astin on disadvantaged students college selection. He asserts that the disadvantaged student should chose an unselective college if he primarily wants the best grades he can get. He asserts that these students survive equally as well as their middle class peers except their grades won't be as high. This student does better at a noncoeducational school than a coeducational one. If he is interested in steady academic progress, staying in school to graduation, his chances are better at a selective school even though his grades will be lower. Attendance at a selective school is likely to increase his aspirations for an advanced degree. There is little likelihood of any drastic change in personal characteristics and habits during the first year.

Race, sex and age play a role as well. A black will not do as well as a nonblack even though past performances were similar. The black student is likely to find the overall college experience less satisfying particulary at a predominantly white university with a special program for disadvantaged students. On the other hand the black is more likely to change his mind than a nonblack about pursuing an advanced degree. Women are more likely to drop out then men in this socio-economic category. An older student has a greater likelihood of dropping out, however, he is likely to make better grades and be more satisfied with the college than the younger student. Students should seek as much string free financial aid as possible particularly scholarships and grants. Major support from loans does not appear to have the same positive effect for the disadvantaged student of grants. If the student enrolls

in an honors program he will earn higher grades. This also improves his chances of persisting and raises degree aspirations. Fraternities and sororities appear to have a certain beneficial effects for students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. Students who join are more likely to persist and to feel satisfied with college. Astin also concludes that things like ethnic centers, special curriculum, special programs which are mainstream, flexible or reduced course loads and empathetic faculty and staff are essential for a successful disadvantaged student program on a selective campus.

This then is the wonderland which our student will seek or which will seek our students. It is a beautiful, comfortable and dangerous place that holds forth the sweetness of success as reward for ones endeavors and bitterness of failure to those who are not ready or willing to meet the demands it places on one. Teach your students as Henry David Thoreau taught to "advance confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavor to live the life which he has imagined. Then he will meet with success unexpected in common hours."